

REMARKS

Pursuant to the present amendment, claims 1, 9, 12, 16, 19, 21, 22 and 24 have been amended, claims 8, 17, 18, 20, 23 and 26-28 have been canceled, and new claims 29-39 have been added. Thus, claims 1-7, 9-16, 19, 21-22, 24-25 and 29-39 are pending in the present application. No new matter has been introduced by way of the present amendment. Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the amendments and arguments set forth herein.

As an initial matter, claims 26-28 were directed to a metallization structure and have been canceled by the present amendment. Applicants specifically reserve the right to pursue the subject matter defined by claims 26-28 in a later filed application should they so desire.

In the Office Action, claims 5, 6-12, 20-23 and 25 were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all intervening limitations.

Pursuant to the present amendment, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations from now-canceled dependent claim 8. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claim 1, and all claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for immediate allowance.

Similarly, independent claim 16 has been amended to re-present now-canceled dependent claim 20 in independent form. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claim 16, and all claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for immediate allowance.

New claims 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33 have been added to re-present dependent claims 6, 7, 22, 23 and 25, respectively, in independent form. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that these

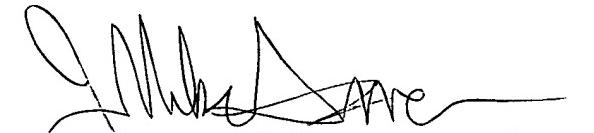
independent claims, and with respect to independent claim 33 all claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for immediate allowance.

New independent claim 39 contains the limitations from both dependent claims 6 and 7. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that new independent claim 39 is likewise allowable.

In summary, it is believed that all pending claims are now in condition for immediate allowance. It should be understood that by amending the present claims to rewrite various allowed dependent claims in independent form, Applicants do not acquiesce any appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections of the original independent claims. Rather, Applicants reserve the right, should they so choose, to pursue such claims in a later filed divisional application. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at (713) 934-4055 with any questions, comments or suggestions relating to the referenced patent application.

Respectfully submitted,

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